
Final Report – Bridges to Understanding (August-December 2010)

Instructions

Below are the basic elements that need to be included in the final report. You are not limited to these elements and may add any other applicable information in the final report. The report should be no more than 15-20 pages including the appendix.

Create a two-page executive summary with 2-3 pictures that highlight the project. Please include most or all of the template headings given below for consistency with the final report.

Please e-mail your completed Final Report to Marcella Wilson at Marcella.wilson@seattle.gov. Send a hard copy of the report to:

Seattle Public Utilities
700-5th Ave. Suite 4900
PO Box 34018
Seattle, WA 98124-4018
Attention: Marcella Wilson

Include the following documents with your report (electronic copies preferred):

- Pictures SPU can share on its web site.
- Copies of all products and printed materials produced for the project, including all translated materials, videos, posters, scripts, etc.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

a) Give a description of your organization and why you applied for funding.

Bridges' mission is to unite and empower youth worldwide, enhance cross-cultural understanding and build global citizenship using digital technology and the art of storytelling. Our programs connect students in Seattle classrooms with their peers around the world via safe discussion forums and through the creation and sharing of digital stories about their lives, communities and global issues. Since its founding in 2001, Bridges has connected thousands of youth worldwide.

Primary goals are for students to gain:

- An understanding of the implications of global challenges for their own and other global regions;
- Empowerment to act on issues that affect all youth; and,
- An awareness of their interconnection with, and empathy for, their peers around the world.
- Students also gain skills in writing, listening, technology, research, presentation and social responsibility.

Bridges completed two classroom projects in the 2009-10 school year at Chief Sealth IHS in collaboration with Global Leadership teacher Noah Zeichner. As a result, Bridges and Sealth had built a strong foundation for continued and expanded projects into 2010-11. Bridges and Sealth applied for this funding because the EJNA Program Goals were a strong match with Bridges' goals for Bridges' project at Chief Sealth and this additional funding could provide a budget for equipment for the school to keep, and key field trips for experiential learning and media collection.

b) Give a basic overview of your project in one paragraph (what did you do)?

Bridges staff worked in collaboration with Chief Sealth HS teachers, Mr. Noah Zeichner and Ms. Nancy Ruzycki, with support from Bridges-trained volunteers, to teach students in Sealth's blocked Global Leadership and Environmental Science class to create short videos ("digital stories") about water quality, product trail, solid waste and conservation for presentation to their fellow students and the wider school community. Students created five short digital stories about issues they cared about in their community related to those topics, and shared the videos in multiple screenings at their school. They also shared what they learned with an elementary class.

TRAINING

a) How many people were trained to conduct outreach to others?

Twenty-nine students of Sealth's Global Leadership-Environmental Science class.

b) What were they trained to do?

The students were trained in methods of digital storytelling (a form of video projection.) As they learned about social and scientific aspects of community environmental issues, they reflected on how those issues related to their lives. They wrote scripts, learned about photography, took photos, learned audio recording techniques, image editing, video editing software, and worked in teams to produce the videos.

c) What methods/strategies were used to train them?

Students were organized into small groups based on their interests. Each group was assigned an adult volunteer to help throughout the process. The class was organized so that, while the Global Leadership – Environmental Science blocked class was taught multiple days per week, the activities specific to the development of the digital stories were done generally once per week. Bridges staff and volunteers aided in the class on that one day per week for most of the project, with extra time added for field trips and extra work days near the end of the project timeline.

Each week, full-class discussion, small group activities and reflection, viewing and discussion of peers' digital stories on community issues and research helped students to concentrate their ideas and form their stories. Two field trip days were key in getting the students excited and interested in the project, and in allowing for the bulk of their photography to be completed, while they had help from Bridges staff and volunteers.

d) What were the successes and challenges of the training?

There were two main challenges: First, there was a very high absentee rate in the class from week to week. Because the students were working in small groups, and therefore relied on each other for completion of various parts of the project, this high absenteeism negatively affected group morale and progress on their project.

Second, there were technical issues with computers and software at the school. In general, school computers are slow, and everyone...especially the students...is frustrated by it. There was a problem getting the serial numbers for the software in time, so training in the editing software was delayed. The day of our final work session, the school's entire network went down. Ms. Ruzycki saved the day and project, since she had some old laptops in a closet in her classroom that allowed for the transfer of files for class use....although the laptops were not without their own problems.

Successes of the training were many. The students were engaged in class much of the time. They learned to work together toward a common goal, and they learned a great deal about the issues they explored. They were proud and excited to share what they learned in the form of their digital stories in the screenings at their school. The success goes beyond this, as they were motivated to do further service that clearly demonstrates how much they learned. The students wrote letters to EPA in early January during the public comment period for the Duwamish River superfund clean-up options, and then sent them to EPA along with a DVD with their relevant digital stories. They also started collection boxes at school for cell phones and shoes to help reduce waste and continue to educate their classmates about waste issues and other options to throwing used items away.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- **Provide the following information regarding each product that was developed and or distributed for this project:**
- **What did you create/modify for this project?**

The combined Bridges/Sealth teaching team created:

 - A calendar/syllabus aligning classroom learning for the Global Leadership and Environmental Science blocked class.
 - Two field experience guides, specific to the locations visited with the student, but easily modified for other locations. These guides encouraged students to relate their classroom learning to what they experienced the field, and to collect relevant media for their digital stories.
 - Five digital stories (short videos) were created by the students about solid waste, conservation and water quality issues titled *Heavy Metal*, *Puget Sound*, *Cell Phones*, *Hazardous Waste* and *Shoe Waste*.

- **Why did you choose this product?**

Digital storytelling was chosen because it is the work at which Bridges excels, and this project offered the opportunity to expand and enhance this work. Developing a stepped curriculum for the blocked classes was required to ensure success of the project. The field experience guides developed by the Bridges/Sealth teaching team ensured that students stayed on task during the field trips, collecting information and media they needed for their projects while reflecting on their learning. These guides were inspired by a similar guide viewed by the teaching team at the 2010 Sustainability Education Summer Institute at Islandwood.

- **What was the process for developing this product?**

The three lead teachers, Noah Zeichner, Nancy Ruzyski and Tania Westby, worked together in summer 2010 to outline the curriculum for the fall term and plan how the Bridges curricular activities would fit into what they planned to cover. The class worked at least once a week from September to early December on their video projects, following the Bridges curriculum. The process for development of their story topics grew from the subject matter they covered in class (product trail, waste) and their reflections on how those issues impacted the students and their community. Students were asked what they cared about, what they wanted to change, what they wanted to be responsible for as global citizens and the issues they wanted to share with their Bridges peers around the world.

- **What were the successes and challenges of the development of the outreach tool?**

Developing the calendar for fall and sticking to it was challenging due to the many issues that come up at a school. It was an incredible success that the two Sealth teachers pulled it off – it is a very uncommon thing and took the students’ learning to a whole new level from the perspective of the Bridges digital story project. This project illustrates a very productive partnership – the strengths of the curriculum that each of the two Sealth teachers and Bridges brought to these students is evident in the final outreach product – the digital stories.

In making the digital stories, the students found that it was often difficult to get all the photographs they needed or wanted to illustrate their points. Technical difficulties were an always-present challenge. But the success of the students’ stories far outweighs the challenges – their stories are totally youth-produced, which makes them an engaging learning tool for other youth. The students expressed why they care about the issues they chose for their stories, and included interesting scientific information. They reached many of their peers through the screenings, and the videos will continue to be shown on various websites and through the school as they continue to educate others.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

- **How many total people did your project educate about your chosen topics?**

Approximately 325 people including the immediate class, volunteers, audiences at the three screenings, and students in the elementary class that the Sealth students visited. Not included in this number are the students around the world who will be educated through watching the videos on Bridges’ website.

- **Who were the primary audiences for your education and outreach activities (i.e. youth, elderly, low-income, Hispanic, Somali, Chinese, etc.)?**

The primary audience was the high school youth, grades 9-12, at Chief Sealth International High School and their immediate community. This is a very diverse school and community; the students who were in the class represent this diversity, reporting their ethnicities on the SPU form as Mexican, White, African-American, Somali, Native American, and Vietnamese American.

- **Provide the following information for each outreach activity you conducted to educate people about your chosen topics.**

Three outreach activities were conducted:

1. Community film festival of digital stories – 12/2/2010

Type: Screening of the students' 5 final digital stories

Topics: The 5 stories were about conservation, solid waste and water quality and were titled *Heavy Metal, Puget Sound, Cell Phones, Hazardous Waste* and *Shoe Waste*.

Number of people educated: 75 attended the film festival

Location: Little Theater at Chief Sealth International High School

Method: Students were asked to bring one guest. Students created posters and hung them around the school. Fliers were also hung around school and students distributed them by hand to friends.

Description: Bridges staff and teachers worked with other school staff to set up the theater technically for the screening. Students were supervised in setting up the food for the reception. Mr. Zeichner introduced the project and each of the "story groups" and each group went on stage to introduce their video and take questions from the audience after it played. Tania Westby, Bridges' lead teaching artist/program director, ran the laptop. All staff assisted with setup and cleanup.

2. Multicultural night at Chief Sealth International High School – 12/9/2010

Type: Stories were shown on a laptop set up on a table, during the school's multicultural night during which attendees learn about various projects and programs at the school.

Topics: The 5 stories were about conservation, solid waste and water quality and were titled *Heavy Metal, Puget Sound, Cell Phones, Hazardous Waste* and *Shoe Waste*.

Number of people educated: Hundreds of people attended this event and walked by the table; 15 people stopped and watched the stories closely.

Location: Hallway at Chief Sealth International High School

Method: Students are required to attend this event and encouraged to bring their families and community members.

Description: Mr. Zeichner attended and supervised students from the class as they shared the stories.

3. Lunch blast -12/17/2010

Type: Screening of all 5 digital stories. Presentation by students included information about the shoe and cell phone drives they had just started to make the student body aware of the collection boxes and motivate them to help reduce waste in their community.

Topics: The 5 stories were about conservation, solid waste and water quality and were titled *Heavy Metal, Puget Sound, Cell Phones, Hazardous Waste* and *Shoe Waste*.

Number of people educated: Approximately 200 students

Location: Stories were screened on large plasma screens in the Chief Sealth cafeteria.

Method: This was a captive audience and didn't require recruitment, since the students were already in the cafeteria for lunch.

Description: Mr. Zeichner coordinated technical needs, including access to the DVD player, plasma screens and microphone, to insure a successful lunchtime showing.

- **What was your outreach method?**

Our outreach method was screening the students' videos that included a project introduction by the lead teacher and an opportunity for the audience to ask questions of the students.

- **What were the successes and challenges of the methods?**

Successes: The screenings were empowering for the students; it took a lot of work to make their deadline, and they were very proud to share their work. The screenings were engaging for the audience; for example, at the 12/2 film fest, audience members asked detailed questions about the projects and the students' motivations for continued service related to the topics.

Challenges: Putting together a multimedia video requires many steps that have to be completed in a particular order. There were many interruptions to the work schedule in the last three weeks of the project which made the work pile up and created stress for the entire class. These included snow days which canceled school, a fire alarm which canceled the work session one week, and a server failure on our last work day.

The biggest challenge during the first screening was being ready for it, due to the many technical challenges and schedule changes that we had faced which had delayed progress of the project. Also, because the school had just been renovated, not all of the A/V equipment was connected yet, so Mr. Zeichner and school staff scrambled to get things ready for the screening in the theater. It was a similar situation for the lunch blast; no one was quite sure of the status of the equipment since it hadn't been used yet, and didn't know if the audio would work. However, they made it happen.

- **What would you change or do differently (if anything) regarding outreach?**

Ideally we would have a longer time frame for the project, with an opportunity for earlier screenings so the students could get exposure to that experience. This might have helped to drive their motivation earlier on. When the film fest day finally arrived, the students were nervous and proud, and reported it as one of the most valuable parts of the project. It is very empowering for students to have a real audience for their work. To create earlier and more frequent opportunities for the students to share their progress publicly would be fantastic. It would help the students to be motivated to not procrastinate, and to create videos with an even higher production value. This would also generate pride among the students for projects earlier in the process, motivating them to invite more of their friends to see the videos at the screenings and online.

BUDGET

- a) Provide an estimate of the total time and money you spent on your project. Include all expenses reported for the project. Provide any insight you have regarding how you achieved project success and what additional funding would be needed for potential expansion of the project in the future.

Type of Expense	Description of Expenses	Total Number of Hours	Total Dollar Value
Paid Labor	Paid time for Tania Westby, Noah Zeichner and Nancy Ruzycki	184.37 hrs	\$7,993.70
Volunteer Time (valued at \$20/hr)	Volunteers helped weekly in classroom and on two field trips	68.00 hrs	\$1,360.00
Non-Labor Expenses	Cameras and accessories, audio equipment, field trip expenses, screening event expenses	N/A	\$3,591.34
TOTAL		252.37 hrs	\$12,945.04

For many years, Bridges has relied on community volunteers to support its classroom programs and they were once again key to the success of this project. Volunteers help Bridges staff guide students on scriptwriting, shot list development, multimedia production and other tasks. They build relationships with the students, gaining their trust over time. It would be wonderful if the funding could provide and expand training program for the volunteers so they feel more prepared in teaching methods and more proficient in the software programs used. Recruiting additional volunteers would be essential to expansion.

With more funding for additional equipment and staff time to coordinate the project, this program could be replicated in other classrooms and schools.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & BENEFIT

- a) If you had PARTNERS helping you with the project, provide the following information.

○ Partner name

Partners were Mr. Noah Zeichner and Ms. Nancy Ruzycki, teachers at Chief Sealth International High School. Indirectly, Global Visionaries (GV) was a partner, as the GV Global Leadership curriculum is at the core of this class.

○ Partner roles and responsibilities

Mr. Zeichner and Ms. Ruzycki took the lead on scheduling the class, developing the shared calendar, and teaching the classes which were not Bridges-specific curriculum pieces. They also helped with field trip coordination and volunteer coaching.

- Total number of hours contributed

Both were paid for 80 hours (40 each) for their curriculum development time during the summer, and coordination activities during out-of-school time during the fall. They contributed countless hours in their roles as staff of Chief Sealth, which were not covered by this grant.

b) If you had VOLUNTEERS helping you with the project, provide the following information.

- Total number of volunteers

3 volunteers from Bridges, 2 volunteers from Global Visionaries

- Total number of hours contributed

68 hours contributed by five volunteers throughout the fall

- Volunteer roles and responsibilities

Volunteers attended an orientation to review the overall project and Bridges curriculum. A background check of each volunteer is handled by the school. The volunteer role was to attend class once/week for the “Bridges day” and support one of the story groups. This included giving feedback on the students’ writing, helping them learn software programs, assisting students with developing their shot lists and photography, helping with media management, etc. Essentially they helped their assigned group of students with whatever the students were working on that week. The volunteers also worked closely with staff, as staff were always on hand if anyone get stuck or has questions. Staff met with volunteers before and after class each week to review the plan for the day and reflect on the success of the activity(ies.) Volunteers also went on the field trips, guiding the students in photography, helping them reflect on what they were seeing while in the field, and the students’ needs for their digital story projects.

c) Describe how the community benefited from your project (i.e. access to resources, youth leadership development, job skills, community building, public health, etc.)

The youth in this class developed leadership skills, and skills in working together as a team. They also gained access to things they wouldn’t normally see, e.g., the Duwamish river from a boat, the inside of the transfer station, and they had the opportunity to learn about various job opportunities related to the issues they were studying.

LESSONS LEARNED

a) Do you consider the results of your project successful? Why or why not? Describe the impact on the community and any outgrowth of activities or inspiration, if any, as a result of it.

This project was a great success, because it fulfilled each part of Bridges’ mission: To unite and empower youth worldwide, enhance cross-cultural understanding and build global citizenship using digital technology and the art of storytelling.

Chief Sealth students viewed the digital stories of their peers around the world and discussed how environmental issues affect all of us (*unite youth, enhance cross-cultural understanding*).

They explored environmental issues in their own community through learning about the social and scientific aspects of garbage and pollution, reflected on what is important to them, and communicated their concerns and hopes to a real audience (*empower youth*).

They used photography, digital storytelling, and online discussion forums, the tools Bridges' specializes in, to communicate these ideas (*digital technology and the art of storytelling*).

Finally, they took action in their communities, both through the PSA-aspect of their digital stories, and the waste collection projects they have started in their school, to collect shoes and cell phones that would otherwise be thrown away (*build global citizenship*). These action projects will extend throughout the rest of the school year, tying into additional parts of the Global Leadership class curriculum.

This project represents a best-practice example for Bridges to Understanding working in a classroom, and will be viewed as a great example of a fully-realized project that includes elements of service learning, media production and global education.

b) What strategies were essential to the success of your project and why were they effective?

Youth-produced digital stories are the **first key essential strategy** within the work of Bridges to Understanding; they are an **alternative method of student engagement** in the classroom. They serve two purposes within the organization, which explain why they are effective:

1) the students are empowered by doing and sharing this work, by doing the research and by building their critical thinking skills around issues that matter to them. The students have a huge sense of accomplishment when they finish these projects and get to show them and share them with a real audience. The process Bridges has developed of having students work in small groups, with the guidance of an adult volunteer, helps them build positive relationships with each other and with community members.

2) The stories foster cross-cultural understanding as they are shared with communities locally and around the world. Students watch these stories and learn directly about the lives of their peers. Since North American teenagers are digital natives, growing up with computers and online communication, this is a medium that totally speaks to them. When they get to see the photos and hear the voices of their peers, through these youth-produced pieces, it grabs their full attention. They focus and listen in a different way.

The **second essential strategy** key to the success of this project was our **partnership with a diverse organization**, Chief Sealth International High School, with its unique curriculum of the blocked Global Leadership – Environmental Science classes. The two teachers with whom Bridges partnered have strong, established relationships with these youth, and a commitment to fulfilling an impressive classroom curriculum connecting environmental science to its social implications. Bridges came in to help only with the parts of the project where it has expertise – photography, media production, media management, technical assistance, volunteer training

and coordination – and, apart from that, the two teachers delivered all of the class content – social studies in Global Leadership and science in Environmental Science. This was a true partnership, which would not have been successful without the full participation of each partner.

c) Describe any barriers or challenges you encountered during the project. Explain how you addressed them and how these might be avoided in the future.

Barriers and challenges we encountered are mentioned above:

Scheduling issues arose and, due to the blocked schedule, caused the “Bridges work day” to shift to a different day in some weeks, which made it difficult for the Bridges volunteers to attend those weeks, since their work schedules were already arranged. Also, these schedule changes were often not finalized until a few days in advance, which made planning difficult. These challenges were addressed by remaining flexible and ensuring Bridges staff members were available to pinch hit for any schedule changes week to week. Staff also discussed and reinforced on many occasions the unpredictable nature of a school’s schedule with the volunteers to help minimize their frustration. Snow days impacted the schedule late in the project, as school was cancelled multiple days due to the weather. Bridges worked with the teachers to schedule additional work time in the following weeks to insure the stories were ready by the film festival deadline.

Technical issues of various sorts plagued everyone throughout the project. First, the school didn’t have the software installed when expected because the serial numbers hadn’t been delivered. This meant the students couldn’t learn the software (Adobe Premiere Elements) in the week where it was scheduled. Responsibility had to shift around for who would teach it and where it would now fit into the carefully planned calendar. The computers at most Seattle public schools are painfully slow to start, log in, and start running a program; this is frustrating to everyone, but especially the students, and negatively impacts morale during a project like this where much of their time is spent on the computers. Once the computers were up and running though, things went smoothly for the most part, and the students enjoyed learning the Adobe programs. The most impactful technical problem was the server failure on the last scheduled work day. No one in the school could log into any computer, which meant there was not only no way to work on the projects on the main school computers, but also no access to the students’ files (including photos, narration tracks, etc.) The key to addressing this unexpected problem was the weekly backup created by the Bridges teacher on an external hard drive, with an organized protocol for media management. Each story group had a folder for their project, with subfolders for each kind of media. When the server failed, a “plan B” was suddenly needed. Thankfully, Seattle teacher Nancy Ruzycki had a set of very old laptops stored in her classroom. These laptops did not require a log in, so all the student files could be transferred over. The students had to work in a different editing program, and it was all very hectic, but they were able to finish their projects in time for the film fest.

The key avoiding technical problems like this is to plan for them. It is almost guaranteed that a project like this will encounter some of the technical problems above, though we have never seen it to such an extreme. It is vital to have files backed up to an external hard drive. It is also key to build a cushion into the time frame – luckily the students were willing to stay during

lunch and after school to finish. (Providing tasty snacks helped!) Identifying a backup plan for computers is a must but is often not an option.

d) Describe any project success stories or anecdotes you would like to share.

Twenty students completed post-project assessments. The data from these forms hasn't been fully analyzed yet, but an interesting point is that 10 students (50% of respondents) reported that their favorite part of the project was the final show, their chance to show and share their work. This points out how important it is to have the real audience for their work and a real deadline to work toward. The students planned the film festival, and genuinely enjoyed it.

e) What advice would you give for groups who would like to implement similar projects?

Start planning as early as possible; begin by meeting with your partners to establish common goals to insure everyone is working toward the same point of success.

This includes organizing the equipment and technical needs of the project, planning use of computer labs and making sure all equipment is ready to use the day you plan for it. Make clear, detailed to-do lists of who is responsible for each part of the project.

Create a media management plan, and be sure everyone (staff, students, volunteers) understands why it is important. Create regular back-ups that are stored off-site.

Label all equipment and work with the teachers to create a system and policies for equipment check-out plus a policy for lost or broken equipment.

Organizing your calendar is key for all participants. Reference it often and communicate regularly to all participants where you are in the process to insure everyone is aware of progress and any problems that may arise with regard to meeting the schedule.

Recruit volunteers early, so you have time to review the overall project and expectations with them. Communicate with volunteers regularly week-to-week through email to remind them of what activities are planned and of any schedule changes. Give volunteers copies of the calendar so they can keep track of what's to come. Give volunteers a class list so they can more easily learn students' names. Take the time to meet with volunteers before and after each activity to prepare them for what's to come and give them time to reflect on their experience afterward. Always remember how key their help is and be sure to communicate your appreciation often.

Give youth as much voice as possible in choosing story topics, and make them key players in organizing the timeline and being responsible for achieving all the tasks it takes to make the deadline. Projects like this are challenging, and the youth really appreciate all they have accomplished, so don't do it for them. Give them guidance but let them do it themselves. While the general subject matter of the videos may be prescribed by the curriculum of the class, it is key to be as flexible as possible in letting youth choose what they want to say about an issue. If they don't care about it or if it's being dictated by someone else, they won't engage nearly as much, and they won't learn as much.

Above all, be as organized as possible. Be as prepared as you can be for the unavoidable, unexpected challenges that arise when working in the complex environment of a school. This way everyone gets to spend more time having fun (learning, reflecting, making great video projects) and less time stressing over the various things that can...and always do...come up (lost pictures, changes in schedule, etc.)